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City Raises Pay for Head Start Teachers

Mayor Tim Kelly has moved to supplement federal pay for Early Learning and Childcare workers for Head Start and Early Head Start, fulfilling a key campaign pledge

Chattanooga, Tenn. (Thursday, Feb. 3) — Chattanooga Mayor Tim Kelly has given unprecedented raises to Head Start and Early Head Start workers, whose salaries are paid by the federal government, by augmenting their pay with a city supplement for the first time in the city's history.

Going forward, Mayor Kelly has directed that all full-time Head Start and Early Head Start employees in the city will now be paid a minimum \$13/hour wage, and all part-time employees will receive a minimum wage of no less than \$11/hour.

Employees who are already receiving the new minimum wage will receive a 3.8 percent city supplement, which on top of a 1.2 percent federal cost-of-living adjustment will bring all employees to a minimum 5 percent pay increase. The pay increases will be retroactive to July 1.

"Our students' first six years of learning play a critical role in their next 60 years, and there is therefore no more important issue to the future of our city than the investments we are making in our early learning teachers and caregivers toward a more equitable workforce and economy," Kelly said. "I firmly believe in the power of education to uplift communities, and we will continue to work throughout my administration to bring every possible resource to bear on this urgent task."

Because the city has historically not supplemented pay for federal workers, who have their own pay scales and compensation structures, the raises took longer to implement than those for other essential city workers that were enacted last year. However, the mayor's office worked closely with SEIU Local 205 throughout the process to ensure a fair and equitable pay supplement.

"While we won't be able to fix every compensation issue immediately, we believe this is a meaningful first step while ensuring the City of Chattanooga can fiscally maintain this commitment," said Joda Thongnopnua, chief of staff for the city.

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